

“Towards the end of my visit Karm Shah Beg produced a big sheep that I was to accept as a token of hospitality and goodwill. I should gladly have taken a smaller one, since for weeks past I had occasion to notice that the sheep which my men selected for purchase were as distinguished for toughness as for size. Karm Shah Beg, however, had different notions on this point, and was not to be denied. So I consoled myself with the thought that at least there would be satisfaction among my men. The Kirghiz are a matter-of-fact people, with a keen eye for money. Hence I did not fail to assure my host that his present would be returned by more than its equivalent in value before I left the valley.

“Late in the evening, as I was comfortably settled in my tent and busy writing, Karm Shah Beg turned up with a triumphant mien to announce the arrival of a Chinese officer from Bulunkul who had brought orders to supply me with transport. It was clear that a great load had been taken from the Beg's mind. Glad as I was for this early settlement of the question, I thought it right to treat the news as a mere matter of course. I could not have expected it otherwise! Karm Shah Beg was accordingly told to keep his Chinaman and the message he was to deliver until I should find it convenient to receive them on the morrow.”

The night brought at last a change in the weather, and when on the morning of the 16th the Beg turned up with the Amban's messenger and the commandant of the Subashi post, I could receive them in the open. I had tea passed round in cups and bowls which my servants procured—I do not know from where—and then received the assurance that whichever way I should choose for my journey to Kashgar, transport would be forthcoming. There seemed little hope of the shortest route down the valley, by the Gez defile, being available; for the river, swollen by the melting snows, was said to have carried away one if not two bridges, which could